



NEWS RELEASE

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Mennonite Housing Services Awarded USDA Rural Development Funding

Maize, KS. – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks today recognized Wichita-based Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services, Inc. for their accomplishments in expanding homeownership opportunities by awarding the nonprofit \$575,000 in technical assistance funding to support their continued participation in the Agency's *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program*. In partnership with USDA Rural Development, over the past six years Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services has assisted in the 'homeowner-participating' construction of nearly seventy single-family homes in Sedgwick County, with thirty-two additional residences planned.

During the funding ceremony, State Director Banks remarked, "USDA Rural Development has a long history of providing assistance to improve homeownership opportunities in rural Kansas. There is an important link between homeownership and personal prosperity. USDA Rural Development provides funding and technical assistance to support achieving this important goal, through the Agency's *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program* and *Single-Family Housing Loan Program*."

Andy Bias, President and CEO of Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services remarked, "We appreciate the support from USDA Rural Development to expand homeownership opportunities. Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services looks forward to a long and continued successful partnership with the Agency."

As a condition of the *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program*, future homeowners are required to personally supply 65% of their own labor to construct their house. Working in individual/family groups of 5-8 participants, eligible applicants collectively work together, and all the residences must be completed before the new homes can be occupied. USDA Rural Development provides technical assistance funding to a qualified nonprofit to oversee the home construction, along with loan financing to the eligible homeowner. Statewide, with the assistance of four non-profit housing partners, the Agency's *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program* has resulted in the construction of over 160 new single-family homes.

State Director Banks also commented during today's ceremony, "This is a tremendous homeownership program which provides affordable housing opportunities. With the assistance of the Agency's outstanding partners, including Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services, USDA Rural Development's *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program* builds homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Most importantly, nearly seventy families have constructed their own home in Valley Center, Maize and Goddard. Twenty-five additional families are currently constructing houses, with plans to break ground on thirty-two more homes this year. This valuable program helps many families realize their dream of homeownership."

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for rural Americans. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development delivered nearly \$235 million in community and economic development programming benefiting Kansas.

For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development programs, individuals may call the Agency's state headquarters at 785-271-2700 or log onto the Agency's Kansas website at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

USDA Rural Development – *Committed to the future of rural communities.*

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